

N10 Backup

AFRICA IN 1983

1. The overall economic outlook for Africa for the next year or so is gloomy. With the exception of South Africa, the African states will continue to suffer in 1983 and probably for the next few years from a decline in domestic economic activity and a growing burden of external debt. This debt will require a constant and difficult process of rescheduling and renegotiation with international and private foreign lending agencies with no assurances that any arrangements that are concluded will markedly improve the economies of the African states that are in deep difficulty.

2. Unless there is a substantial rise in world demand for agricultural and mineral exports prompted by a recovery from the worldwide recession, the continuing strain of debt repayment and high prices of imported goods will prevent any substantial rise in living standards for most of Africa's population. There is a real possibility that the decline in the modern sector of the economy in many countries will place an even greater burden on urban populations already heavily dependent on imported food. Discontented urban dwellers are potential threats to internal stability in many areas. The extraordinarily high rate of population growth in such countries as Kenya is far exceeding the growth in food production. The cost of raising food production to reach self sufficiency is well beyond the capabilities of most African governments today.

3. The overall political prospect for Africa is that of unstable regimes propped up temporarily in some cases by periodic infusions of outside economic aid. Some governments may be toppled by internally fomented coups brought

about by failure to live up to the expectations of their people, lower ranking military officers, or by tribally-inspired violence. But these coups will in many cases be irrelevant since the new regimes, whether military or civilian, will be no more capable than their predecessors of tackling the fundamental economic problems besetting their countries. There will, of course, be exceptions to this somber scenario. Nigeria, with its oil wealth, may prosper moderately if the demand for its oil picks up and the government can better manage its finances and economic development. Ivory Coast, though experiencing current financial difficulties, has the basic infrastructure--albeit heavily dependent on French capital and technical expertise--upon which economic progress can be built, depending on the size and exploitation of the country's offshore oil resources. Similarly, Zimbabwe, with its strong agricultural base and mineral resources, may weather the economic crises of the coming years unless the economy is damaged by internal dissension, increased hostility between Zimbabwe and its neighbors, or by increased white emigration.

4. The coming year is not likely to see serious armed incursions by black African armies against their neighbors. With very few exceptions, African armies are designed for the protection of the domestic political leadership and for suppression of internal dissent, rather than organized aggression against another country. Indeed, most African armies suffer from such logistical shortcomings that they would have great difficulty transporting and supporting a sizeable force even as far as their borders. Except for the continuing low-level hostilities between Ethiopia and Somalia, the fighting that occurs will largely consist of cross border terrorist activity, especially in southern Africa by liberation groups, and

destabilization efforts by such externally-supported movements as the NRM in Mozambique or UNITA in Angola. South African military activities against their black neighbors in response to terrorist activity will probably intensify, thereby increasing tensions throughout southern Africa and making it more difficult for the US to work for constructive solutions to regional problems.

5. The prospect of chronic instability in many African countries--as well as emotionally charged continent-wide issues such as apartheid in South Africa--presents attractive opportunities for the Soviets and their surrogates to continue their substantial involvement in African affairs at the expense of US interests and at relatively little cost to themselves. Even though Moscow places less importance on sub-Saharan Africa than on other areas of the world, this does not mean that the Soviets will countenance the loss of areas where they have considerable influence, such as Ethiopia, Angola or Mozambique, or that they will not take advantage of opportunities presented by the weakness of African governments, particularly those in southern Africa, which the Soviets have chosen as a focal point of their activity.

6. The inability of black African leaders to meet the basic needs of the urban populations and their military establishments weakens the US effort to blunt Soviet influence in Africa. The United States and its western allies, not the Soviets, will be expected to come up with the financial aid necessary to shore up shaky pro-Western regimes. When this is not forthcoming in the expected amounts (and it will not be possible for the West and international agencies to meet what Africans consider to be their minimal needs), the Soviets can benefit by the failure of Western rescue efforts. For example,

many African regimes perceive that the US has great influence with the IMF. When the IMF proposes tough austerity measures on the potential recipients of its loans, the US is often faulted for not pressing the IMF to ease the conditions for lending financial assistance.

7. Soviet efforts to promote their interests are also aided by the continued meddling by Libya's Qadhafi aimed at undermining pro-Western governments through subversion--Somalia and Sudan--and in some cases support of Islamic fundamentalist groups. A number of West African regimes could be threatened by fundamentalist activity as the riots in northern Nigeria in 1980 and 1982 illustrate.